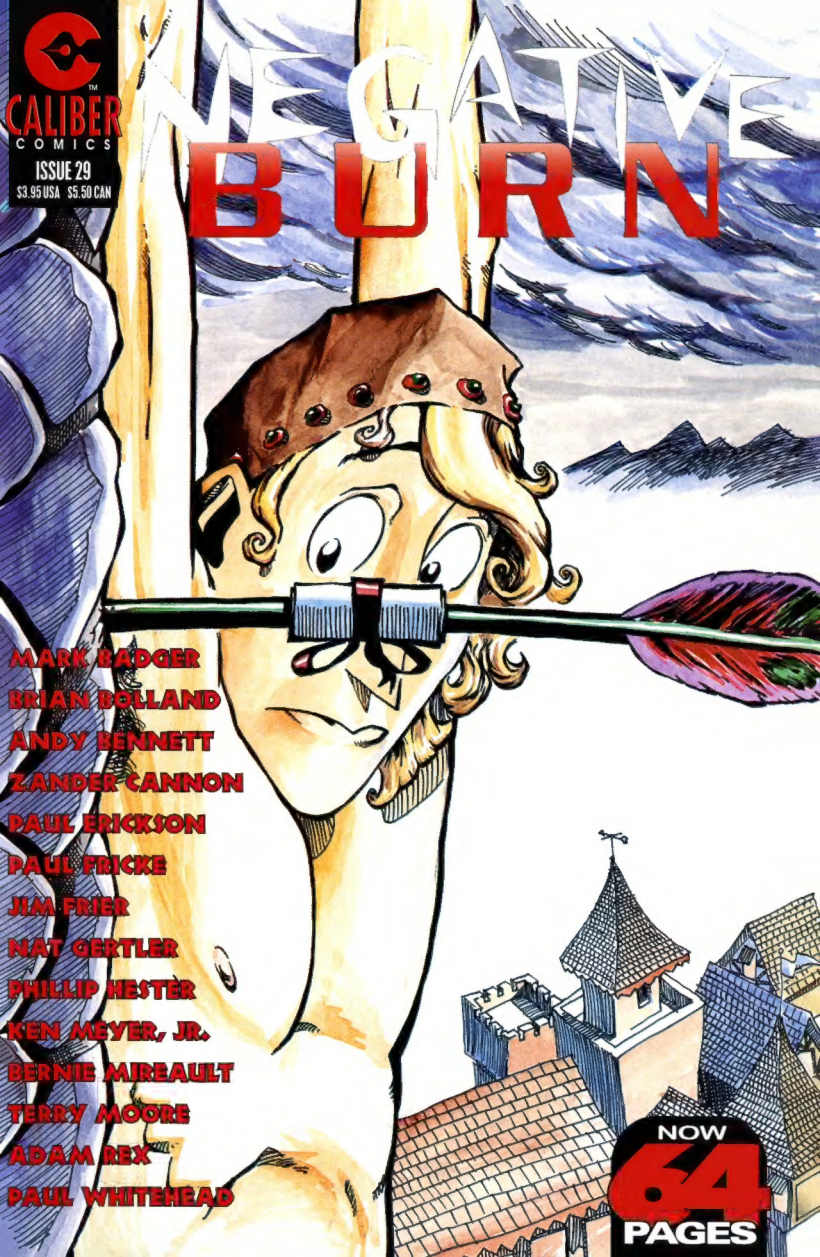
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NOW
64
PAGES

NEGATIVE BURN

A Mad Hatter Studios International Product • Joe Pruett ~ Editor

VOLUME ONE • NUMBER TWENTY-NINE

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by Zander Cannon

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written and illustrated
by Brian Bolland

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illustrated by Mark Badger

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written by Paul Erickson
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illustrated by Adam Rex and
Paul Whitehead

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by Andy Bennett

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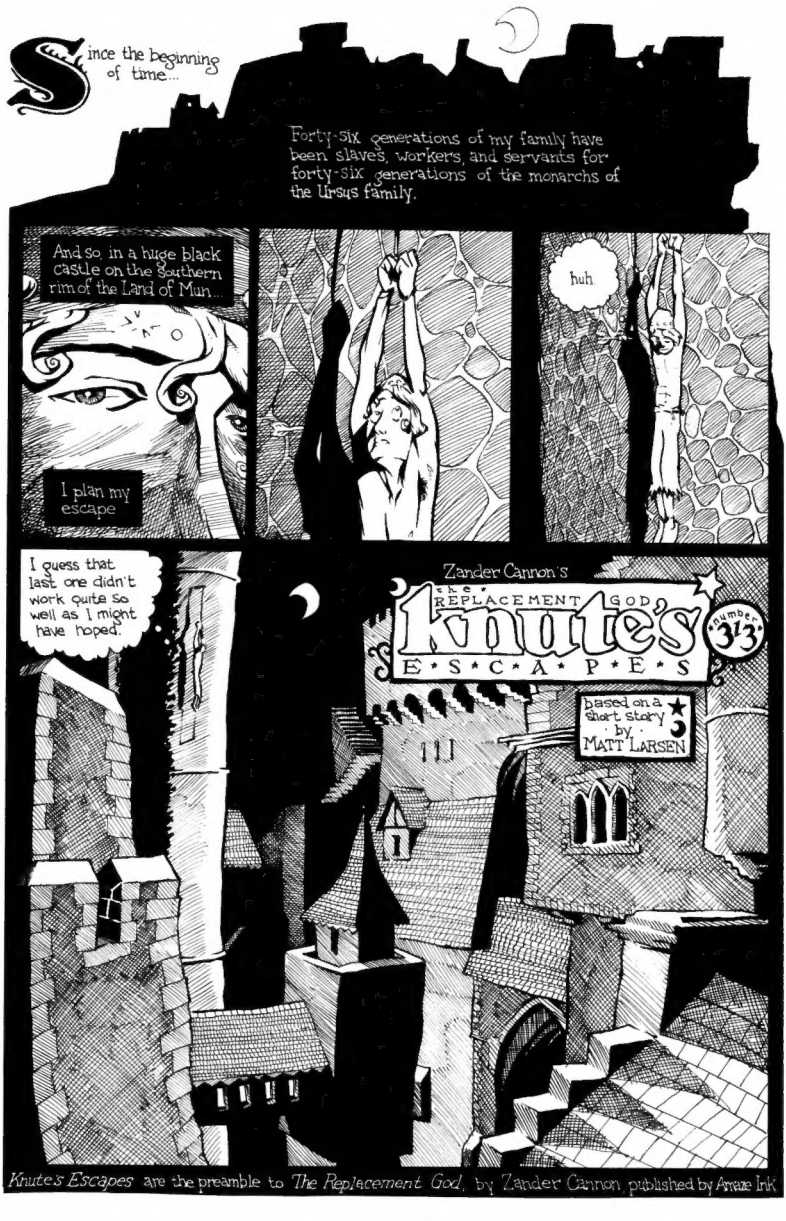
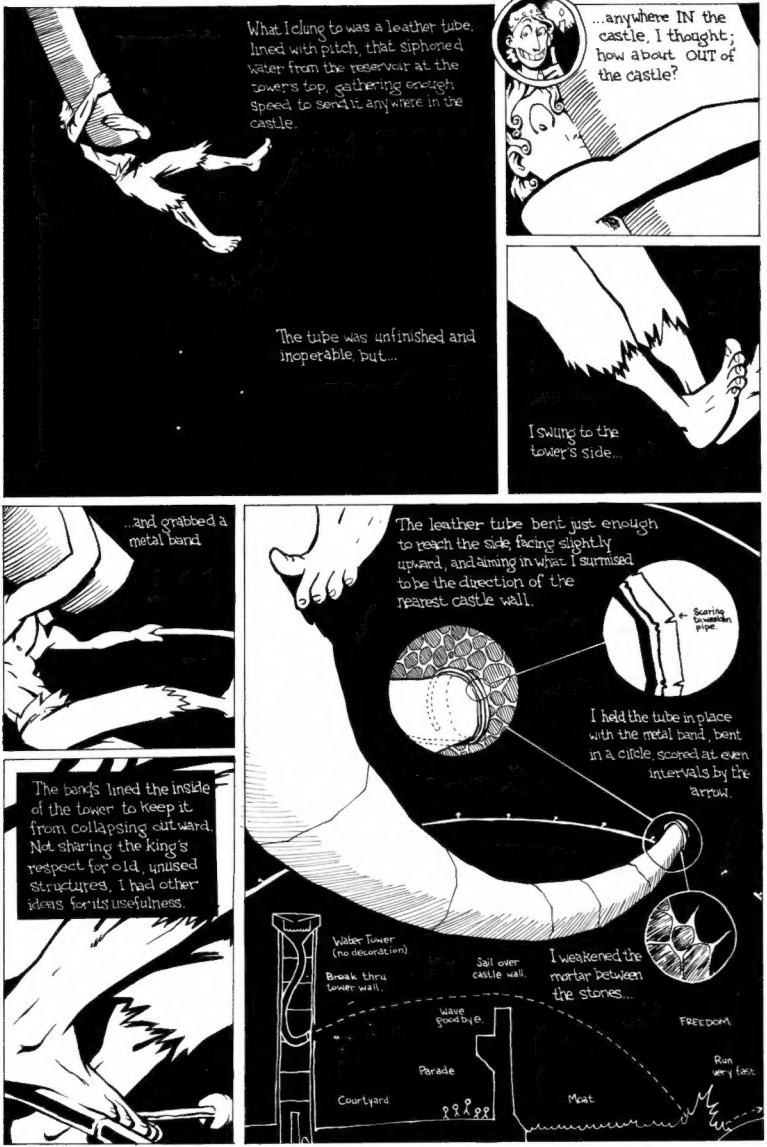

Since the beginning of time...
Forty-six generations of my family have been slaves, workers, and servants for forty-six generations of the monarchs of the Ursus family.
And so, in a huge black castle on the southern rim of the Land of Mun...
I plan my escape
huh
I guess that last one didn't work quite so well as I might have hoped.
Zander Cannon's
The Replacement God
Knute's Escapes
Number 3.13
based on a short story by Matt Larsen
Knute's Escapes are the preamble to The Replacement God, by Zander Cannon, published by Amaze Ink

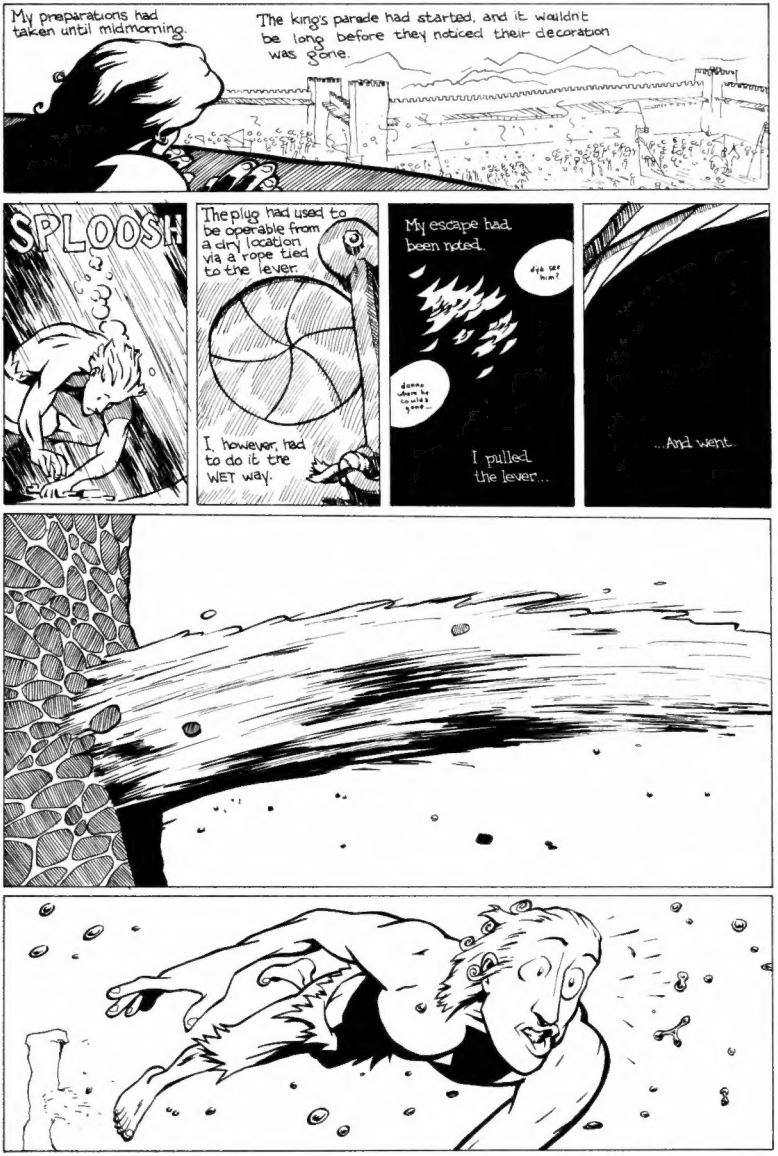
I looked up to examine my bindings...
The wrist and ankle bindings were deceptively simple, and drew ever tighter with each movement...
The opposite end of each one was attached to a steel pole that protruded from the side of the tower.
And then there was the matter of the arrow embedded next to me...
FWOP
Welcome to the DCCCXCVIII th Annual "Feast" of "Friendship." featuring the Baa-Sheep RAM QUARTET Penned laughing WEASELS STERN-FACED INFIDELS from the North the MUN ALL-STILT FLAG CORPS PLUS a naughty slave boy displayed as decoration and as a warning against the path of a scofflaw
...decoration...
There was just enough give in the foot straps to pull myself up level with my wrists.
The wrist straps were old enough that a few bites cut through...
SNAP
...though I was then left to wonder what would hold me up without them.

I flailed blindly -
And caught the nearest thing to me.
don't break don't break
KRRAK
Then I thought, SAY! arrows have sharp points I could use this!
...and so...
CHOK
AAAAAAWHOOAH!
I took this opportunity to assess my situation:
① my hands were free.
② I had a sharp arrow
SNAP
And ③, I was hanging by a thin leather strap hundreds of feet above a courtyard.

The next metal pole that protruded from the tower was approximately 10 ft. above me
PICK
PICK
PICK
Luckily, I had that arrow.
Only a short distance separated the top pole from the lip of the top of the tower.
Once atop the structure, I looked around me. The tower rose above the castle walls by more than two hundred feet. The top of the tower was a metal funnel leading down to a hole in the center.
up!
uh!
stupid tower
The surface was somewhat slick.

SLIP
WO!
WO! WHA?
WAIT! HOLD ON!
SRT SKID
WONG!
AAH!
SPLOOSH
RRGH... Friggin' shin.
Inside the tower was a reservoir of rainwater. In front of me was what appeared to be a service door.
I hoped this long abandoned door would lead to a lightly guarded exit.
RRIP
what the.
ZIP!
WAM!
WHOOF


What I clung to was a leather tube, lined with pitch, that siphoned water from the reservoir at the tower's top, gathering enough speed to send it anywhere in the castle.
The tube was unfinished and inoperable, but...
...anywhere IN the castle, I thought; how about OUT of the castle?
I swung to the tower's side...
...and grabbed a metal band
The bands lined the inside of the tower to keep it from collapsing outward. Not sharing the king's respect for old, unused structures, I had other ideas for its usefulness.
The leather tube bent just enough to reach the side, facing slightly upward, and aiming in what I surmised to be the direction of the nearest castle wall.
Scoring to weaken pipe.
I held the tube in place with the metal band, bent in a circle, scored at even intervals by the arrow.
Water Tower (no decoration)
Break thru tower wall.
Sail over castle wall.
I weakened the mortar between the stones...
Wave goodbye.
FREEDOM!
Parade
Run very fast
Courtyard
Moat


My preparations had taken until midmorning.
The king's parade had started, and it wouldn't be long before they noticed their decoration was gone.
SPLOOSH
The plug had used to be operable from a dry location via a rope tied to the lever.
I, however, had to do it the WET way.
My escape had been noted.
dyk see him?
dunno. whom he couldn't good...
I pulled the lever...
...And went.

This story was adapted by Zander Cannon from a prose short story by Matthew Larsen. For a detailed description of *Knute's Escapes* submissions, send a S.A.S.E. to 2011 Pleasant Ave. S. Apt. 5, Mpls, MN 55404.

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· the visigoth death horde · an order of exiled knights · the lure of the faerie ·
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by Zander Cannon
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AT LAST THE TRUTH

AT LAST THE TRUTH CAN BE TOLD. MY NAME IS **ALBAN SKANDEBEG** AND I – NOT MR **BOLLAND** – AM THE ACTUAL AUTHOR OF THE MR. MAMOULIAN CARTOON STRIP.

THIS MAY COME AS A SURPRISE TO YOU THE READER, BUT CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE CHANGED FOR ME, SO MR. **BOLLAND** AND I AGREED THAT YOU SHOULD HAVE THE WOOL PULLED OVER YOUR EYES NO LONGER. YOU SHOULD KNOW THE TRUTH.

UNTIL VERY RECENTLY I LIVED IN A SMALL HILL TOWN NOT FAR FROM **TIRANE** THE CAPITAL OF **THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF SHQIPERI**, ONCE RULED BY THE DESPOTIC KING ZOG, AND KNOWN IN THE WEST AS **ALBANIA**.

SOME YEARS AGO A CARTOON SECTION FROM A WESTERN NEWSPAPER FOUND ITS WAY INTO MY HANDS. THROUGH AN INTERMEDIARY WHO MUST REMAIN ANONYMOUS I MANAGED TO ACQUIRE A COLLECTION OF CARTOON PAGES WHICH I KEPT HIDDEN IN SECRET PLACES.

THROUGH THE SAME INTERMEDIARY I BEGAN TO EXCHANGE LETTERS WITH MR. **BOLLAND** WHO IS WIDELY TRAVELLED AND WAS KNOWN TO HAVE AN INTEREST IN MY COUNTRY.

I HAVE TO SAY HIS WORK IS NOT REALLY MY CUP OF TEA, BUT HE WAS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT MY WORK AND SUGGESTED I PRODUCE A CARTOON SPECIFICALLY FOR THE WESTERN MARKET

THE RESULT WAS MR. MAMOULIAN. I SUGGESTED THE CARTOON WOULD PROVE MORE SUCCESSFUL IF THE PUBLIC THOUGHT IT WAS BY MR. **BOLLAND** WHO I UNDERSTAND IS A "BIG WHEEL" IN CARTOONING CIRCLES. HE AGREED RATHER RELUCTANTLY

ONE DAY IN **SHQIPERI** A "**FRIEND**" NOTICED A MR. MAMOULIAN PAGE IN MY ROOM, AND THE NEXT MORNING THE POLICE CAME. BUT I GAVE THEM THE SLIP, AND THREE DAYS LATER I CROSSED INTO **MONTENEGRO, YUGOSLAVIA**. I AM NOW "HOLED UP" IN A SECRET PLACE WHERE I CONTINUE TO DRAW MY CARTOONS.

I MISS MY BELOVED **SHQIPERI** (WHICH MEANS **EAGLE COUNTRY**) BUT MY ART COMES FIRST. I EMERSE MYSELF IN MAGAZINES AND BOOKS ABOUT **GREAT BRITAIN** IN THE INTERESTS OF AUTHENTICITY, AND ONE DAY I HOPE TO VISIT THAT FABLED LAND.

MR **BOLLAND** GRACIOUSLY ALLOWS ME TO SIGN HIS NAME TO MY WORK, FOR WHICH I THANK HIM, AND I LIVE IN HOPE THAT HE WILL SOON BE ABLE TO SEND ME SOME OF THE MONEY I AM OWED FOR ITS PUBLICATION, SO THAT I CAN BUY INK, AND ALSO SUPPORT MY WIDOWED MOTHER BACK IN **SHQIPERI**.

OF COURSE MY REAL NAME IS NOT **ALBAN SKANDEBEG**. **SKANDEBEG** WAS THE 15TH CENTURY FEUDAL BARON WHO EXPELLED THE **OTTOMAN TURK** AND WHOSE STANDARD – THE DOUBLE HEADED EAGLE – ADORNS OUR FLAG

NO FUNNY PUNCH-LINE FOR YOU THIS TIME I FEAR, FOR I AM IN A MELANCHOLY MOOD. MY THOUGHTS ARE ON MY BELOVED HOMELAND, MY **SHQIPERI**.

PERHAPS I WILL HAVE A PUNCH-LINE FOR YOU NEXT TIME.

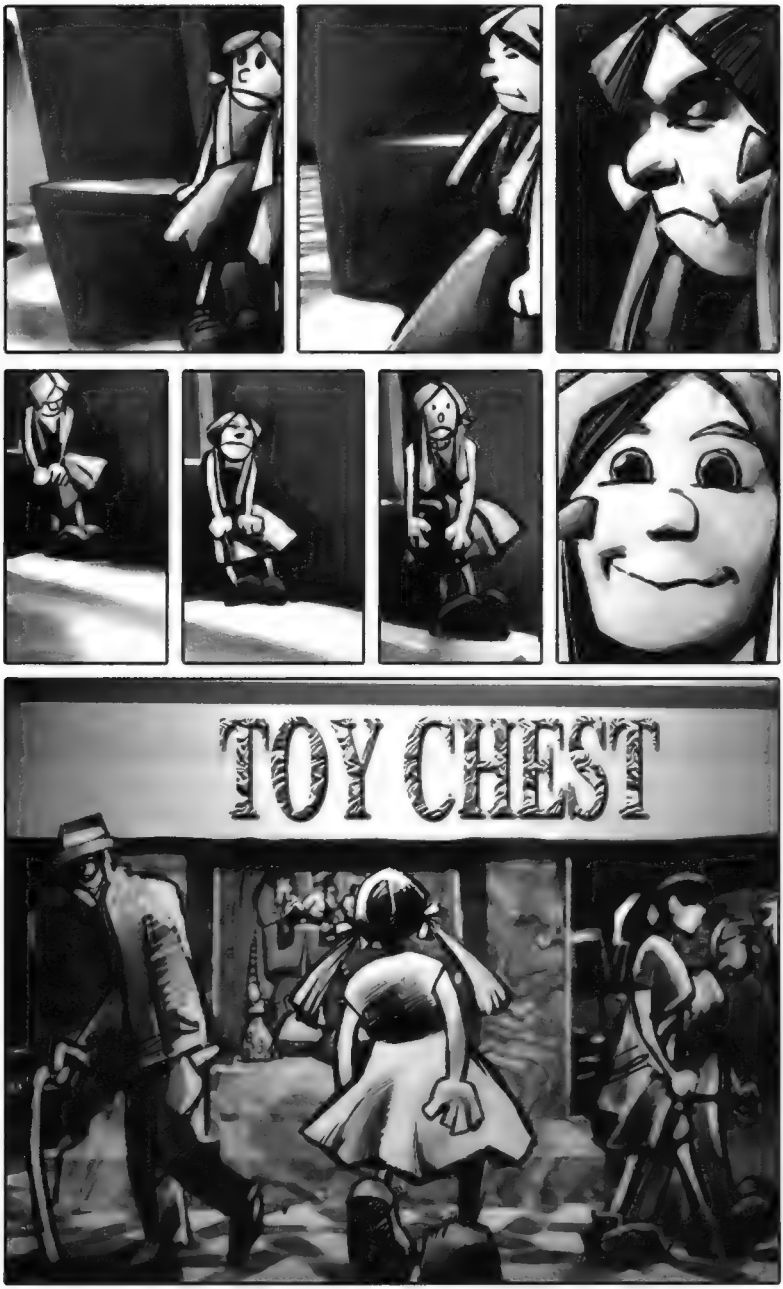
CHIMERA!
HUMAN BEINGS ARE INTERESTING CREATURES
WORDS: JIM FRIER
PICTURES: MARK BADGER
SOME ARE OUTWARDLY HOSTILE, FULL OF VENOM AND SPITE.
GET OUTTA HERE!
DAMN KIDS.
..YET CAPABLE OF GREAT LOVE AND GENTLENESS.

OTHERS PROJECT AN IMAGE OF CONGENIALITY AND FRIENDSHIP.
. WHILE HARBORING DARK SECRETS AND EVEN DARKER DESIRES
THERE IS ONE THING THAT IS COMMON AMONG MOST HUMANS.
SCREAMING TREES
THEY ARE SELDOM WHAT THEY SEEM.
EXCUSE ME.

CAN I HELP YOU?
NO THANKS. I'M JUST LOOKING.
DON'T WORRY. .
...I'LL LET YOU KNOW.
MOMMY, I WANNA SEE THE TOYS! MOMMY! I SAID...

SHUT UP!
I TOLD YOU NOT TO EMBARRASS ME! JUST WAIT TILL WE GET HOME. I'LL TEACH YOU SOMETHING YOU WON'T FORGET!
SOMETIMES I THINK YOUR SOLE PURPOSE IN LIFE IS TO DRIVE ME CRAZY!

YOU STAND RIGHT HERE
AND DON'T YOU DARE
GO ANYWHERE


TOY CHEST

HEY, MISTER
MISTER!
HUH?
ARE YOU OKAY, MISTER?
YES DEAR, I'M ALRIGHT. ARE YOU?
OF COURSE WHY WOULDN'T I BE?
I'VE SEEN THE THINGS THAT YOUR MOTHER DOES TO YOU.

I DON'T LIKE IT. I FIND IT...UPSETTING.
UH. I BETTER GO. MY MOM'LL GET MAD IF I'M NOT WHERE SHE LEFT ME
YOUR FRIEND DOESN'T LIKE IT EITHER. I'VE NEVER SEEN A CRYING PIG BEFORE, AND I'VE SEEN MANY STRANGE THINGS.
YOU'VE SEEN HIM! YOU'VE SEEN MISTER TRUFFLES!
I HAVE IF HE LOOKS LIKE THIS!

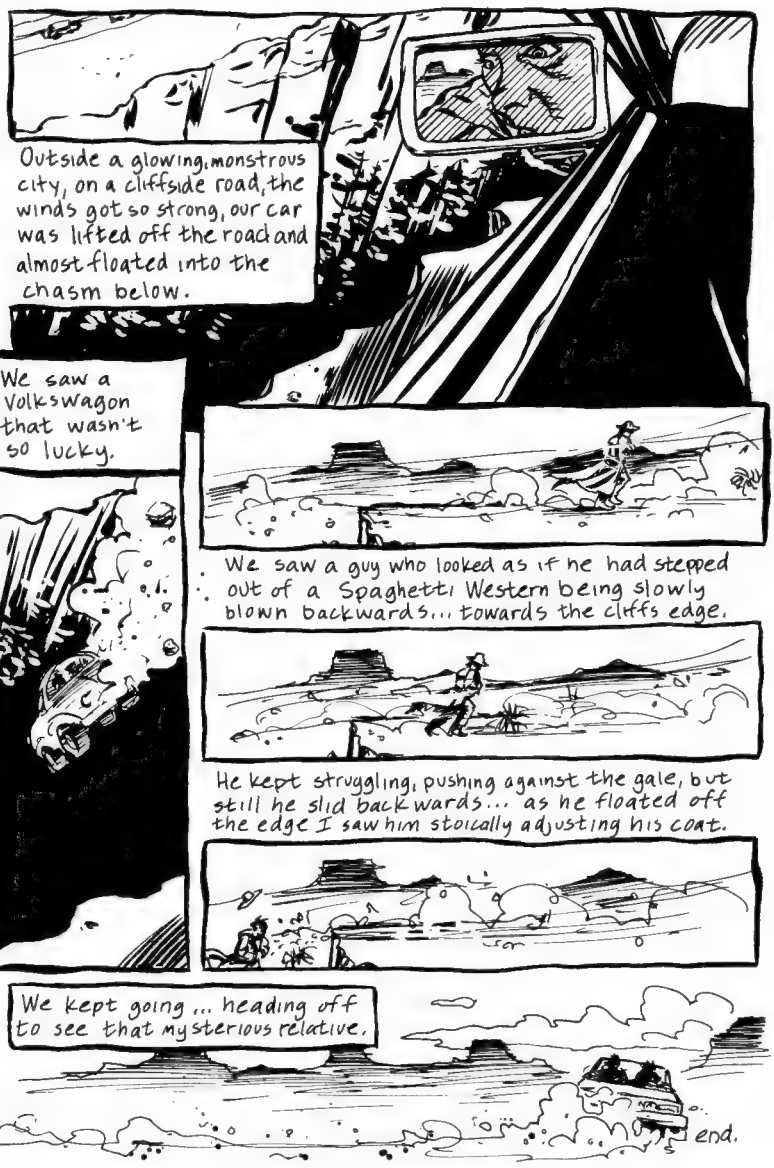
WAIT A MINUTE. HOW CAN YOU SEE HIM? HE'S MY IMAGINARY FRIEND.
I DONT KNOW. WHAT'S IMAGINARY TO YOU IS REAL TO ME.
OR IS IT THE OTHER WAY AROUND? LET'S SEE. IMAGINATION IS REALITY AND REALITY IS.
ANYWAY, THAT'S NOT THE POINT. THE POINT IS THAT YOUR FRIEND WANTS TO HELP YOU, BUT HE'S NOT STRONG ENOUGH. THAT'S WHY HE'S SAD.
I CAN MAKE IT SO THAT MISTER TRUFFLES CAN HELP YOU. HE CAN KEEP YOU SAFE. WOULD YOU LIKE THAT?
YES.
JULIE!

JULIE!
YOU GET OVER HERE RIGHT NOW.
I GOTTA GO. BYE BYE!
... SWEAR I CAN'T TAKE YOU ANYWHERE.

END

PRE-ROAD DREAM
of/by Ken Meyer Jr. 95
A group of us sat around a fire at the edge of a huge forest; myself, my brother Steve, Mike (an artist in my studio), and a few others.
Mike had given some bad drugs to a friend of ours...
...he died.
Mike didn't seem to care.
Disgusted and pissed, Steve and I left.
On the way home, we decided to take a trip to see a grandparent we'd never met.
We seemed to get younger with each block.

First, though, we'd have to get the car keys and permission from our mother/girlfriend...
... and that scared the shit out of me. I knew she could kill us in a second...
... I'd seen her take her face off and saw the hideous creature underneath.
But for some reason, she let us go.
I was sure she was going to kill me.
So we took off in our stepfather's car into the desert...


Outside a glowing, monstrous city, on a cliffside road, the winds got so strong, our car was lifted off the road and almost floated into the chasm below.
We saw a Volkswagon that wasn't so lucky.
We saw a guy who looked as if he had stepped out of a Spaghetti Western being slowly blown backwards... towards the cliffs edge.
He kept struggling, pushing against the gale, but still he slid backwards... as he floated off the edge I saw him stoically adjusting his coat.
We kept going... heading off to see that mysterious relative.
end.

PAUL PRY and the PLASTIC CUP

PAUL FRICKE ©1995

May 4 - 1:27 a.m.
squeek
squeek
squeek
squeek
squeek
eek
oh
squeek
squeek

squeek
ooooooh.
squeek
squeek
May 8 - 2:18 a.m.
squeek
squeek
AH! AH!
OOOOH!
OOOH!
uh-huh
uh-huh
AAH--
squeeka
squeek
AIEEEE
OH!
squeek
squeek
ooooooh.
squeek
Agdah
clik

May 9 - 2:01 a.m.
May 11 - 1:48 a.m.
...mm...
ohmm...oh..
...ahh..
..NEVER LISTEN..
...DO YOU WANT FROM ME..
...YOU ALWAYS..
...I NEVER..
:sob:
...DON'T..
:sob:
PLEASE..
:sob:
:sob:
May 13 - 12:30 a.m.
squeo
eek

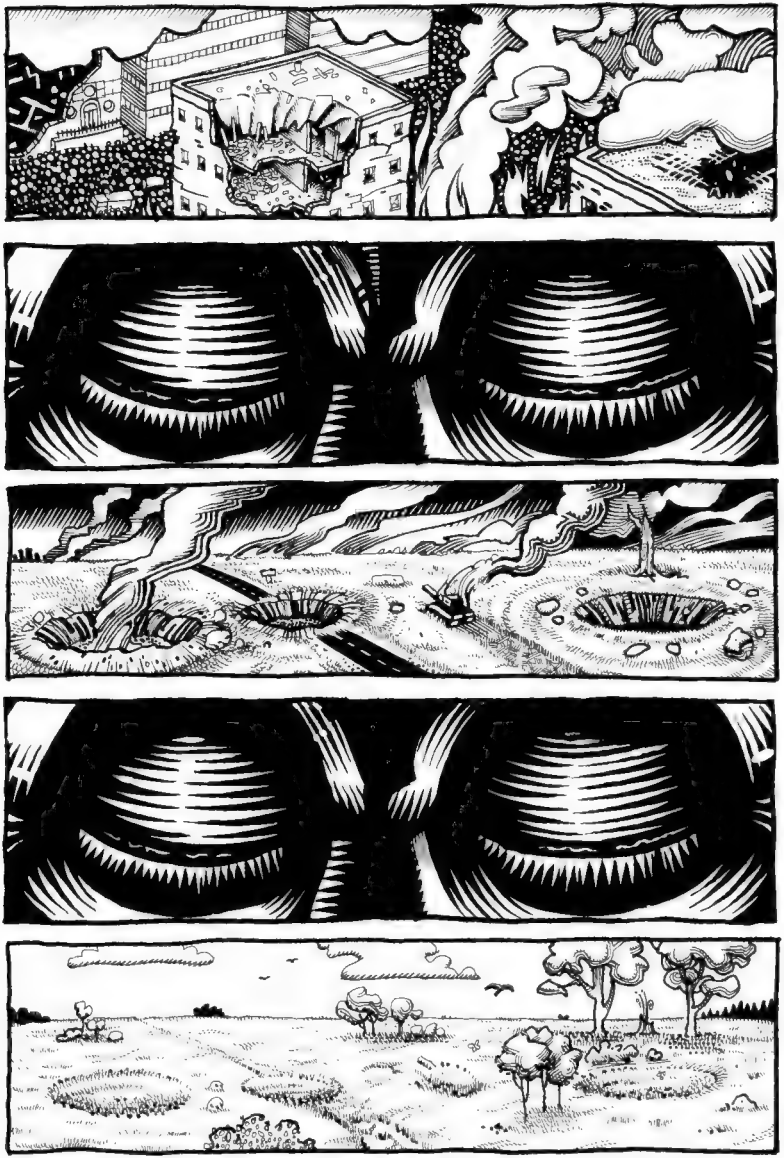
May 18 - 1:15 a.m.
...EYES ARE ALL BLOODSHOT. YOU'VE BEEN WATCHING OUT THAT WINDOW FOR HOURS.
YEAH, I WAS.
WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO IF ONE OF 'EM CATCHES YOU?
eek
Eh, DEPENDS WHICH ONE.
oh
eek
squeek
NOW, MISS TORSO, FOR EXA--
AAAAAAH...
squeek
eek
...SURE IS THE EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY GIRL.
YEAH, SHE'LL WIND UP FAT, ALCOHOLIC AND MISERABLE!
SPEAKING OF MISERY....

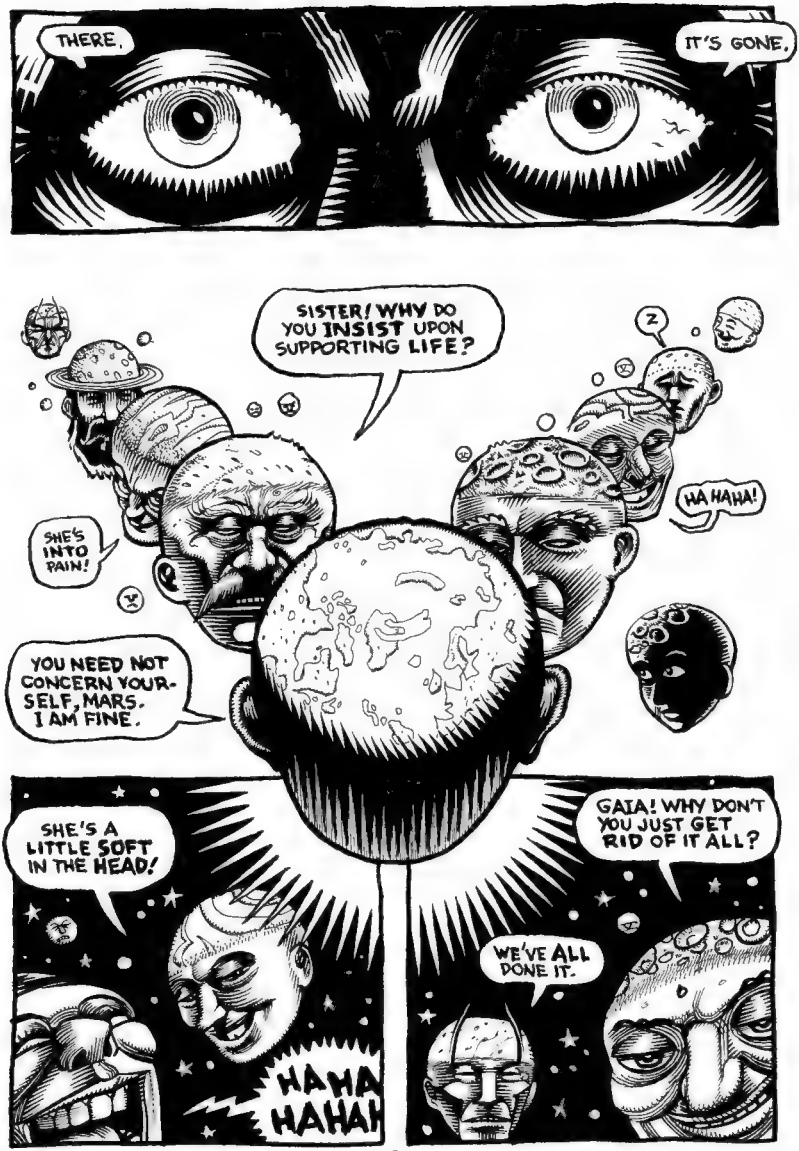
May 19 - 1:22 a.m.
May 20 - 12:43 a.m.
May 21 - 1:08 a.m.
May 22 - 12:18 a.m.
May 23 - 1:45 a.m.
May 24 - 1:16 a.m.
squeek
-ah-
squeek
squeek
oooooh!
Squeek
ooh..
squeeka
eek
ooooh FRANKIE
squeeka
ah-ah!
Squeek
eek
oOOooh.
eek
squeek
squeek
squeek
eek
Ah
Squeek
eek
Oh
Squeek
eek
squeek
eek
OOOH
squeek
eek
AAAh
squeeka
eek
squeek
AAIIEEEEE!
squee
eeka
eek

May 26 - 12:24 p.m.
May 28 - 1:21 a.m.
...ALWAYS HAVE TO MAKE IT SO..
...DON'T UNDER-STAND..
SHUT UP!
...DON'T YOU TELL ME...

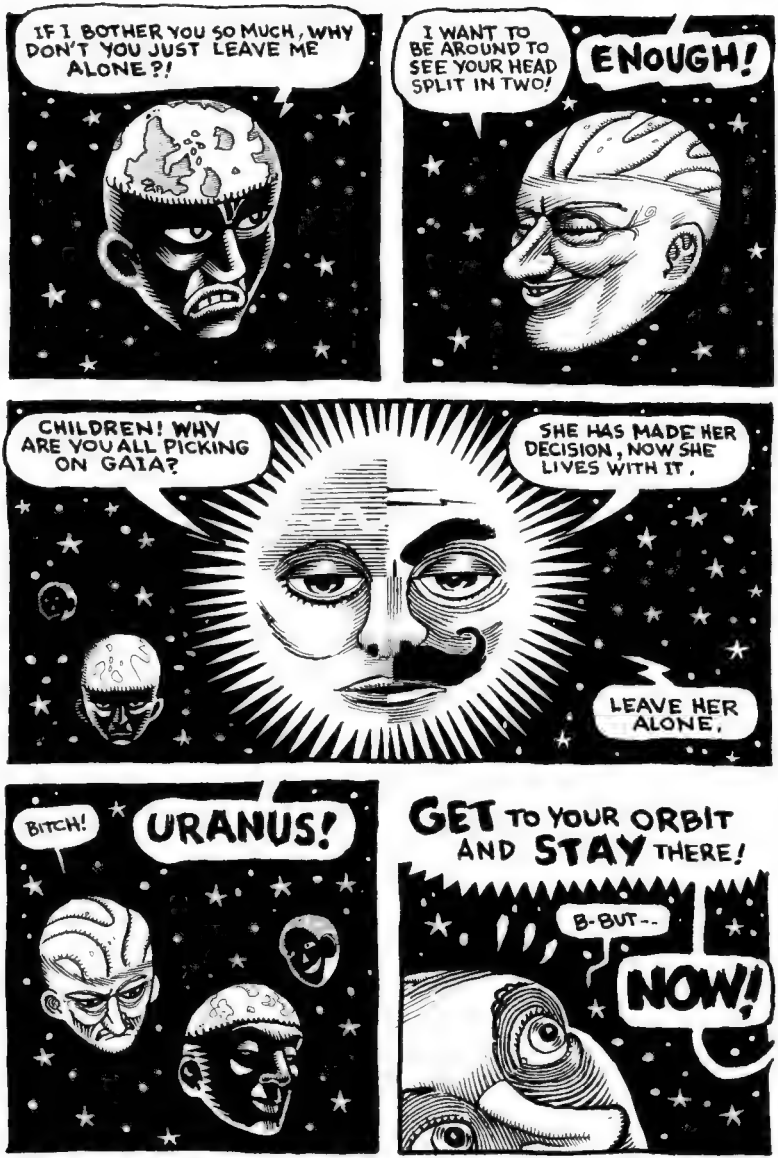
May 31 - 12:32 p.m.
June 1 - 1:43 p.m.
Hello, Neighbor!
uh... HI.
7
clik
June 2 - 2:02 a.m.
THE END

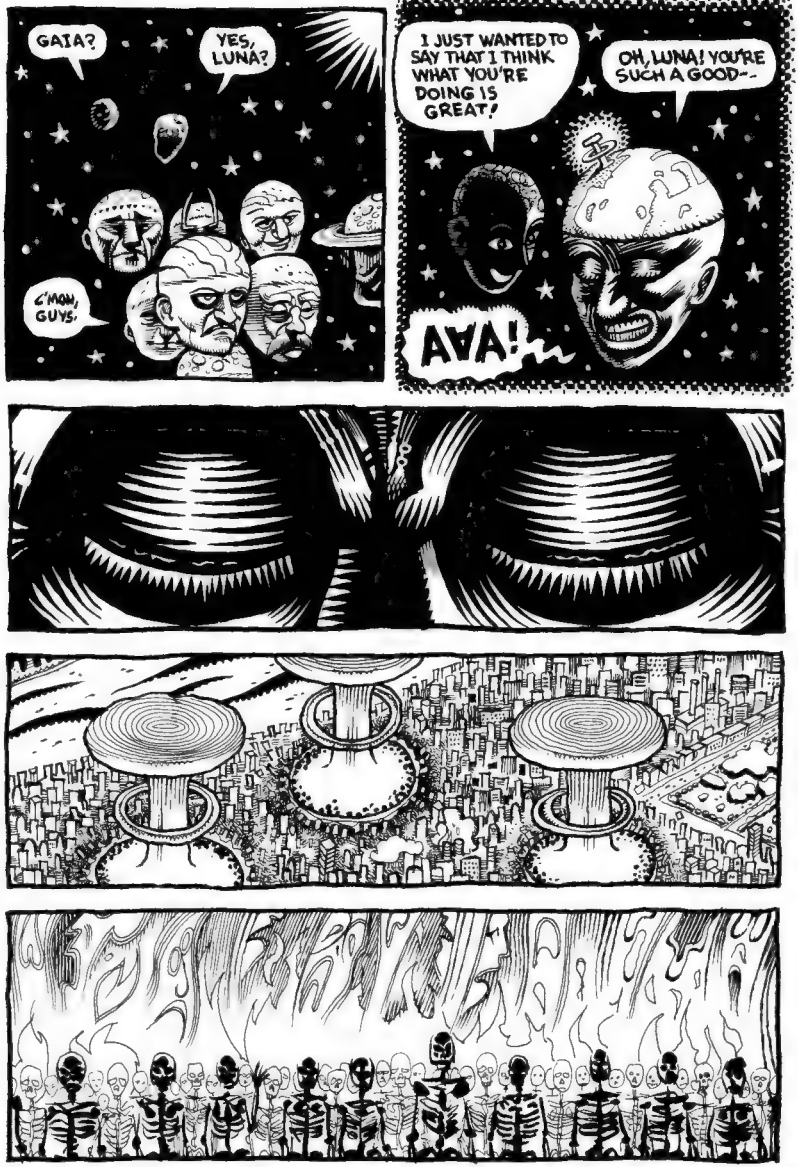
OF THE SPHERES
WRITTEN AND DRAWN by BERNIE MIREAULT.
AAA!
GAIA!
DON'T WORRY, LUNA...
... JUST ONE OF MY HEADACHES.
IT WILL PASS.



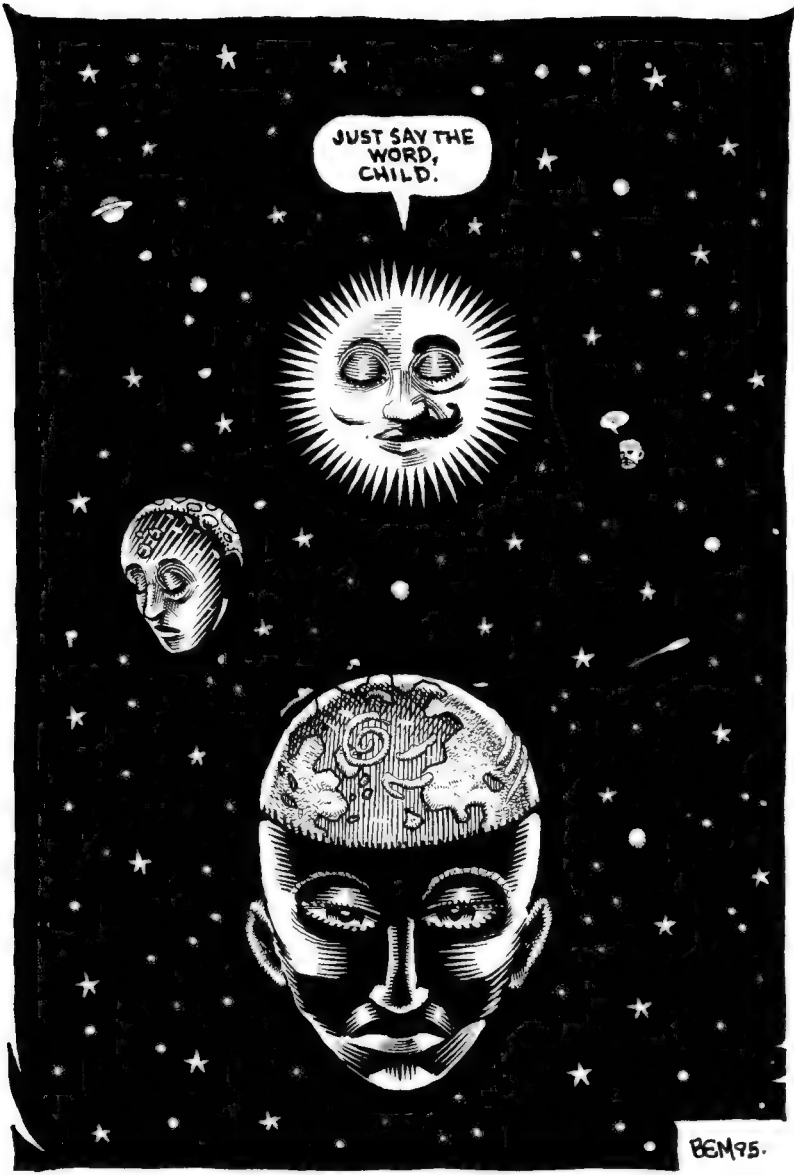

THERE.
IT'S GONE.
SISTER! WHY DO YOU INSIST UPON SUPPORTING LIFE?
Z
HA HAHA!
SHE'S INTO PAIN!
YOU NEED NOT CONCERN YOURSELF, MARS. I AM FINE.
SHE'S A LITTLE SOFT IN THE HEAD!
HAHA HAHA!
GAIA! WHY DON'T YOU JUST GET RID OF IT ALL?
WE'VE ALL DONE IT.

IT'S EASY!
JUST ASK MOTHER AND FATHER.
JUST SAY THE WORD, DEAR. WE CAN CURE YOUR INFESTATION IN A FLASH!
NO, THANK YOU.
I'M FINE!
I DON'T MIND A LITTLE PAIN SOMETIMES.
IT HELPS RELIEVE THE BOREDOM.
OH! SO WE BORE YOU, DO WE?
WELL, YOU'RE NO PRIZE, EITHER!
GAIA'S GOT BUGS! GAIA'S GOT BUGS!
URANUS! YOU LEAVE HER ALONE!
HAHA HA!
IT'S TRUE!
WE CAN'T EVEN GO NEAR WITHOUT RISKING INFECTION!
YOUR ATMOSPHERE STINKS!
THE SPACE AROUND YOU IS ALWAYS FULL OF JUNK!


IF I BOTHER YOU SO MUCH, WHY DON'T YOU JUST LEAVE ME ALONE?!
I WANT TO BE AROUND TO SEE YOUR HEAD SPLIT IN TWO!
ENOUGH!
CHILDREN! WHY ARE YOU ALL PICKING ON GAIA?
SHE HAS MADE HER DECISION, NOW SHE LIVES WITH IT.
LEAVE HER ALONE.
BITCH!
URANUS!
GET TO YOUR ORBIT AND STAY THERE!
B-BUT--
NOW!

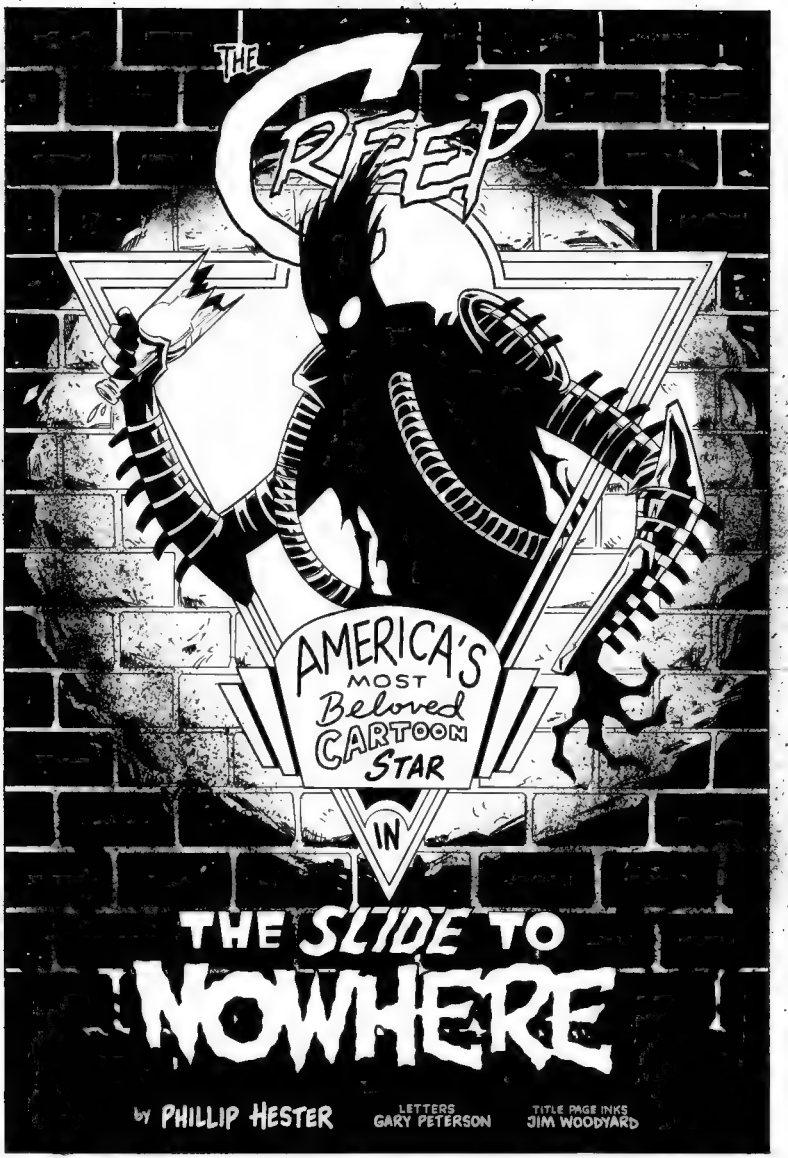

GAIA?
YES, LUNA?
C'MON, GUYS.
I JUST WANTED TO SAY THAT I THINK WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS GREAT!
OH, LUNA! YOU'RE SUCH A GOOD--
AAA!

GAIA!
DON'T...
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOU?
....
I--I DON'T KNOW.
THE LIFE I NURTURE IS ILL. THERE IS SUCH PAIN!
MAYBE I SHOULD END IT.

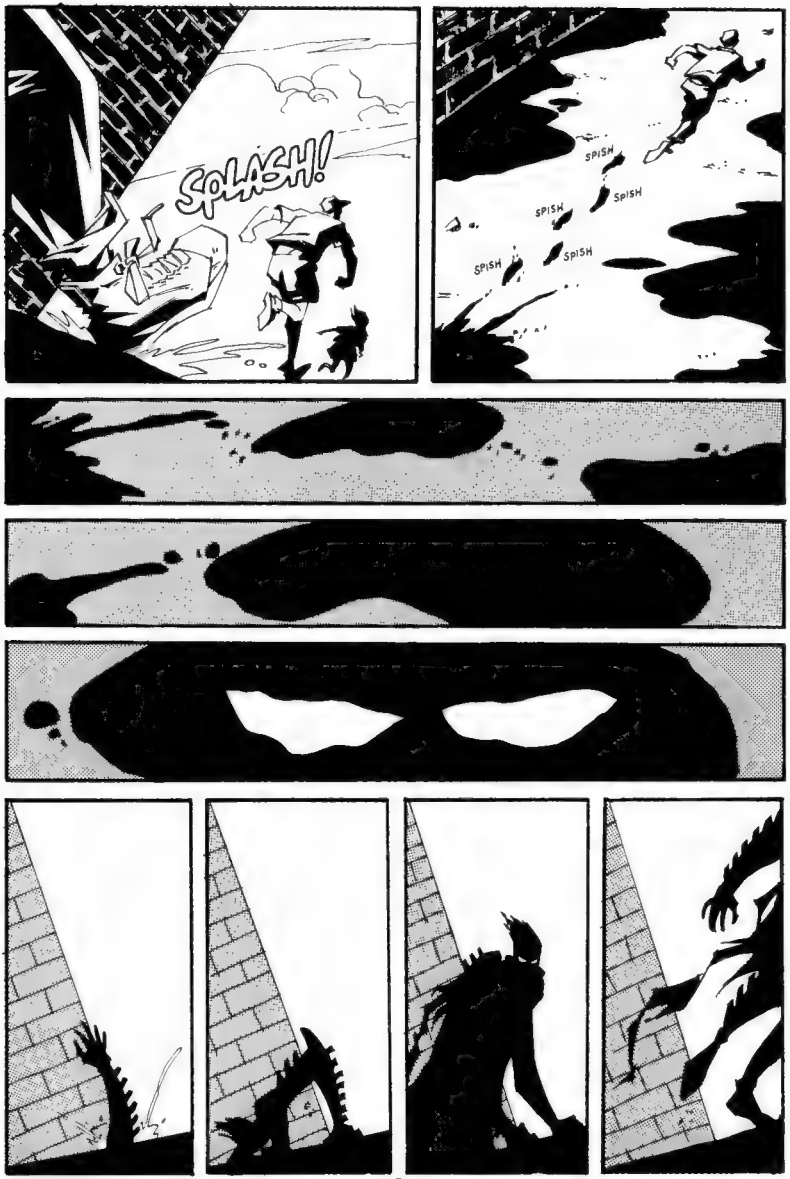

JUST SAY THE WORD, CHILD.
BEM95.

TERRY MOORE
SKETCHBOOK
KAIPPE
THE LAST WARRIOR

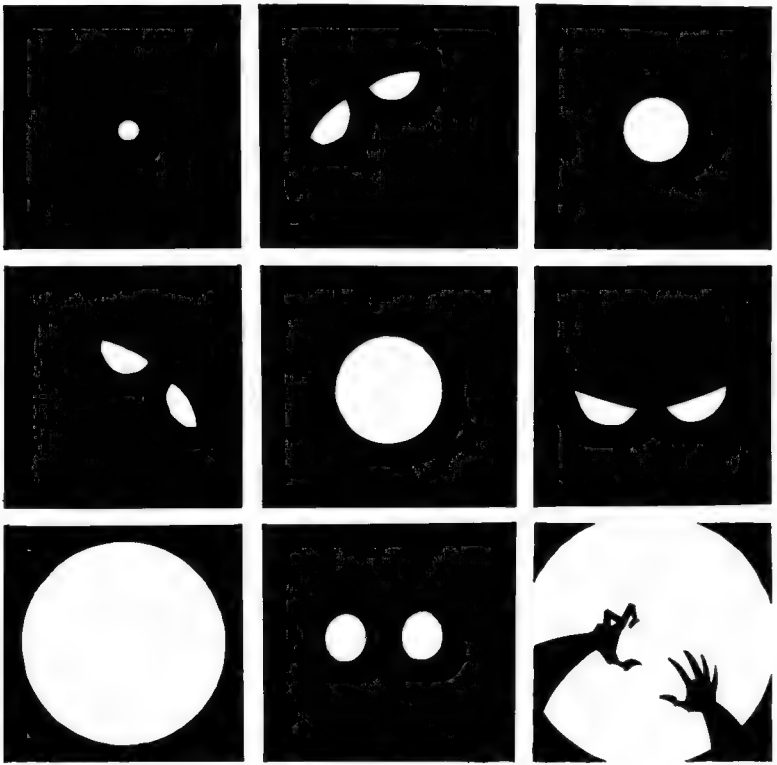
HR ~ THE PIN UP TOUCH
LETTERS
EXCUSE ME. IS THIS YOUR DOG?
WOOFF
ALRIGHT
CECIL ALEXANDER JERSEY BURGER
MOLLY MUTLER
DEATH BITES
AA WEE! GAREE EEZ NOT SO MARREED AHS HE THEEN

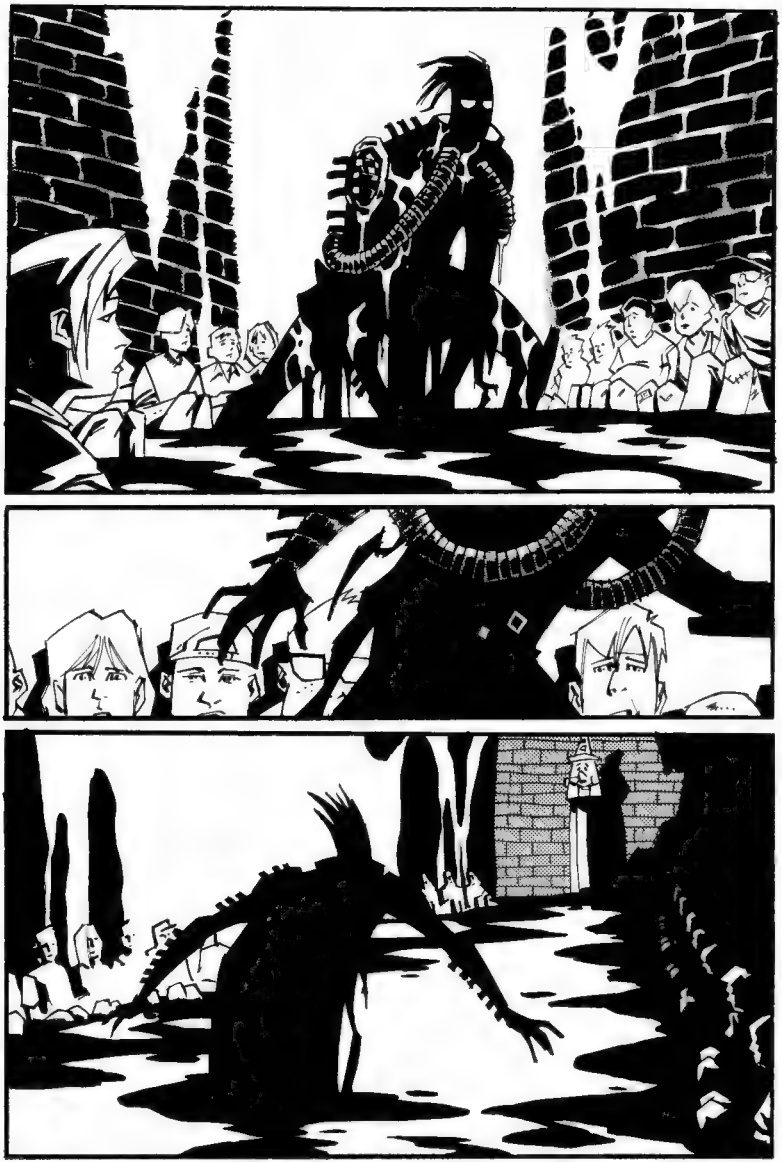

THE
CREEP
AMERICA'S MOST Beloved CARTOON STAR IN
THE SLIDE TO NOWHERE
by PHILLIP HESTER
LETTERS GARY PETERSON
TITLE PAGE INKS JIM WOODYARD

THUNK


SPLASH!
SPISH
SPISH
SPISH
SPISH
SPISH

FWASH





RRR
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SPOINK!
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zzzz

EEEEEE
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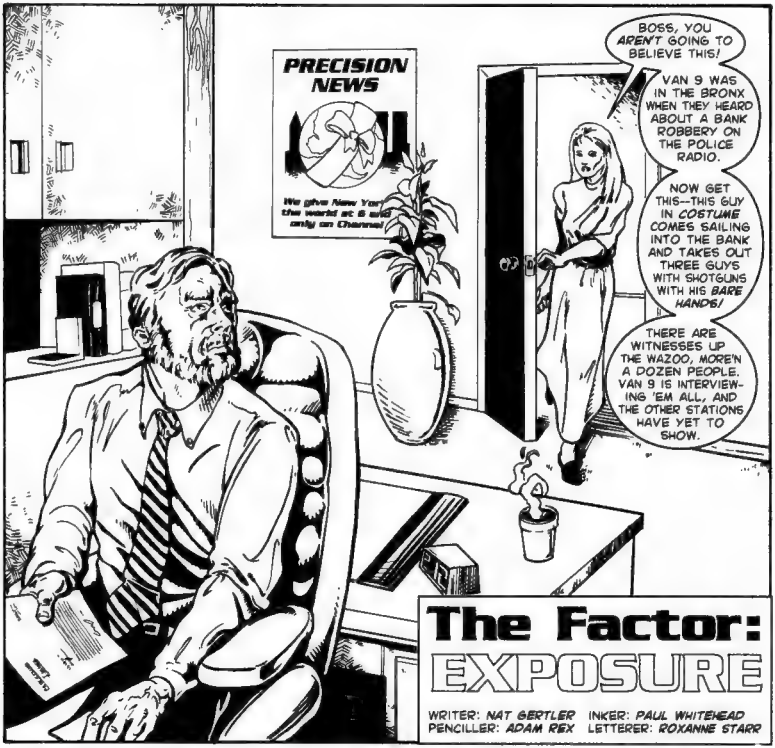
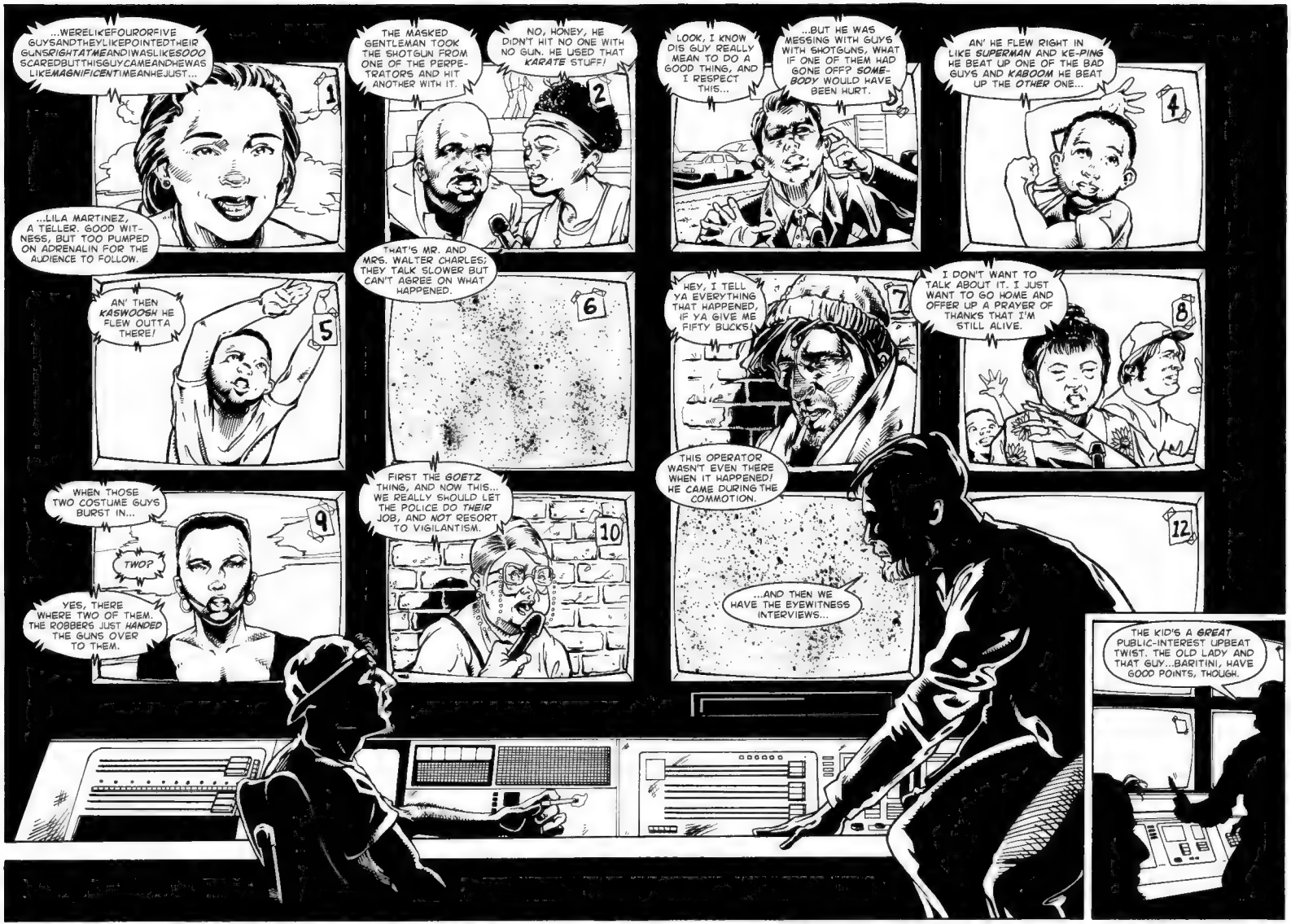

PRECISION NEWS
We give New York the world as it will only on Channel
BOSS, YOU AREN'T GOING TO BELIEVE THIS!
VAN 9 WAS IN THE BRONX WHEN THEY HEARD ABOUT A BANK ROBBERY ON THE POLICE RADIO.
NOW GET THIS--THIS GUY IN COSTUME COMES SAILING INTO THE BANK AND TAKES OUT THREE GUYS WITH SHOTGUNS WITH HIS BARE HANDS!
THERE ARE WITNESSES UP THE WAZOO, MORE'N A DOZEN PEOPLE. VAN 9 IS INTERVIEWING 'EM ALL, AND THE OTHER STATIONS HAVE YET TO SHOW.
The Factor:
EXPOSURE
WRITER: NAT GERTLER INKER: PAUL WHITEHEAD
PENCILLER: ADAM REX LETTERER: ROXANNE STARR

DID THEY GET THERE IN TIME TO GET FOOTAGE OF THIS ALL HAPPENING? DID THEY GET AN INTERVIEW WITH THE COSTUME GUY?
THE WHOLE THING WAS OVER WITH BEFORE THE POLICE GOT THERE, AND THE COSTUMED GUY JUST SCRAMMED.
I'VE GOT MADGE CALLING THE BANK TRYING TO GET A COPY OF THE SECURITY CAMERA FOOTAGE.

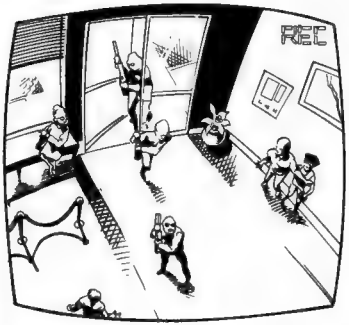
TELL THEM TO SHUTTLE SOMEONE OVER WITH WHATEVER THEY'VE GOT SO FAR...WE MIGHT WANT TO DO A NEWSBREAK ON THIS.


...WERELIKEFOURORFIVE GUYSANDTHEYLIKEPOINTEDTHEIR GUNSRIGHTATMEANDIWASLIKESOOO SCAREDBUTTHISGUYCAMEANDHEWAS LIKEMAGNIFICENTIMEANHEJUST...
1
...LILA MARTINEZ. A TELLER. GOOD WITNESS, BUT TOO PUMPED ON ADRENALIN FOR THE AUDIENCE TO FOLLOW.
THE MASKED GENTLEMAN TOOK THE SHOTGUN FROM ONE OF THE PERPETRATORS AND HIT ANOTHER WITH IT.
NO, HONEY, HE DIDN'T HIT NO ONE WITH NO GUN. HE USED THAT KARATE STUFF!
2
THAT'S MR. AND MRS. WALTER CHARLES; THEY TALK SLOWER BUT CAN'T AGREE ON WHAT HAPPENED.
6
LOOK, I KNOW DIS GUY REALLY MEAN TO DO A GOOD THING, AND I RESPECT THIS...
...BUT HE WAS MESSING WITH GUYS WITH SHOTGUNS, WHAT IF ONE OF THEM HAD GONE OFF? SOMEBODY WOULD HAVE BEEN HURT.
AN' HE FLEW RIGHT IN LIKE SUPERMAN AND KE-PING HE BEAT UP ONE OF THE BAD GUYS AND KABOOM HE BEAT UP THE OTHER ONE...
4
AN' THEN KASWOOSH HE FLEW OUTTA THERE!
5
HEY, I TELL YA EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED, IF YA GIVE ME FIFTY BUCKS!
7
I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT. I JUST WANT TO GO HOME AND OFFER UP A PRAYER OF THANKS THAT I'M STILL ALIVE.
8
WHEN THOSE TWO COSTUME GUYS BURST IN...
TWO?
YES, THERE WHERE TWO OF THEM. THE ROBBERS JUST HANDED THE GUNS OVER TO THEM.
9
FIRST THE GOETZ THING, AND NOW THIS... WE REALLY SHOULD LET THE POLICE DO THEIR JOB, AND NOT RESORT TO VIGILANTISM.
10
THIS OPERATOR WASN'T EVEN THERE WHEN IT HAPPENED! HE CAME DURING THE COMMOTION.
...AND THEN WE HAVE THE EYEWITNESS INTERVIEWS...
12
THE KID'S A GREAT PUBLIC-INTEREST UPBEAT TWIST. THE OLD LADY AND THAT GUY...BARITINI, HAVE GOOD POINTS, THOUGH.

WE'LL HAVE TO DECIDE WHAT SORT OF *SPIN* WE'LL PUT ON THIS.
11
IT WOULD BE EASY TO DO *"MYSTERY HERO SAVES DAY"* STUFF, BUT THIS MIGHT BE BETTER TAKEN WITH A HEALTHY SLICE OF CYNICISM.

YOU'RE GOING TO LOVE ME AND YOU'RE GONNA HATE ME!
WHY? WHAT'S THIS?
IT'S A DUPE OF THE SECURITY CAMERA TAPE.
MADGE, *I LOVE YOU.* WHAT'S THE BAD NEWS?
YOU'LL SEE WHEN YOU SEE THE FILM.

LISTEN, TELL THEM NO NEWS BREAKS ON THIS. PUT A SIMPLE CRAWL OVER WHATEVERTHEHELL SOAP OPERA IS SHOWING NOW...
"MYSTERY MAN STOPS BANK HOLDUP IN BRONX, DETAILS AT 6," SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
MAKE IT THE LEAD PLUG IN THE "TONIGHT AT SIX" LEADS, BUT DON'T GO INTO ANY DETAIL, GOT IT?


REC

I WISH THESE THINGS HAD *AUDIO.*
REC

DAMN, HE SHOT OUT THE CAMERA!
MADGE, I DON'T LOVE YOU ANY MORE!

DO YOU KNOW HOW THICK THE GLASS ON THOSE DOORS ARE? HE SHATTERED IT AS IF IT WERE NOTHING!
HE'S TOO MUCH OF A BLUR; THERE ISN'T A CLEAR SHOT OF HIM IN THE BUNCH...
ARE THOSE SUNGLASSES HE'S WEARING? CAN'T TELL A DAMN THING ABOUT HIM.
CAPTAIN SHEA'S DOING A PRESS CONFERENCE. WE'VE GOT A FEED COMING IN.
FINALLY, MAYBE SOMEONE KNOWS WHAT'S GOING ON! PIPE IT IN HERE.
...TO REPORTS, THE PERPETRATORS WERE STOPPED BY A LONE INDIVIDUAL. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER SAID INDIVIDUAL WAS ARMED OR NOT.
THE PERPETRATORS WERE UNCONSCIOUS ON THE SCENE BY THE TIME THAT THE POLICE ARRIVED.
WE HAVE NOT DETERMINED THE IDENTITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN QUESTION, NOR HAVE WE AN ACCURATE DESCRIPTION OF SAID INDIVIDUAL.
THIS IS DUE PARTY TO HIS MASK OBSCURING HIS FEATURES, PART OF A COSTUME THAT SEEMS TO HAVE DISTRACTED THE WITNESSES.
WE ARE SEEKING THIS INDIVIDUAL FOR QUESTIONING.
ANYONE HAVING ANY INFORMATION REGARDING HIS IDENTITY OR WHEREABOUTS SHOULD CONTACT THEIR LOCAL PRECINCT HOUSE.

CAPTAIN SHEA, IF YOU HAVE THE PERPETRATORS IN CUSTODY, WHY ARE YOU SEEKING THE VIGILANTE?

DAMN IT, WHY COULDN'T ONE OF OUR BOYS HAVE ASKED THAT?
ONE OF THE PERPETRATORS HAS INDICATED THAT THE INDIVIDUAL IN QUESTION WAS IN FACT INVOLVED IN SETTING UP THIS CRIME.

WHILE THE OTHER PERPETRATORS DENY THAT THIS IS THE CASE, WE DO FEEL THAT ALL POSSIBILITIES SHOULD BE INVESTIGATED.
CRAP, THAT PUTS A WHOLE BLOODY NEW SPIN ON THINGS...
I MEAN, EITHER WE HAVE SOME KIND OF GODDAMN SUPERHERO, OR WE HAVE SOME REALLY CRAZED PUBLICITY STUNT AIMED FOR GOD KNOWS WHAT.

...AND HERE ARNE HAS SPLICED TOGETHER THE WITNESSES' DESCRIPTION OF OUR MYSTERY MAN--
...WAS BIG, AND HE WAS WEARING THIS TIGHT BLUE COSTUME WITH SOME KIND OF STAR ON IT
I THINK HE WAS WEARING HIS PAJAMAS OF ALL THINGS, AND HE HAD THESE FUNKY GOGGLES ON
DO NOT
HE HAD BLONDE HAIR, BEAUTIFUL BLONDE HAIR
COULDN'T SEE HIS HAIR, ARMS, OR NOTHIN'
HE APPEARED TO BE A MALE CAUCASIAN, SHORT, MAYBE 5'4", SLIGHT BUILD
IT LOOKED KINDA LIKE A PURPLE NINJA COSTUME
...HE WAS DEFINITELY A BLACK GUY
THERE WAS SOME SORT OF SYMBOL ON HIS CHEST, I THINK IT WAS ONE OF THEM JEWISH STARS
HEJUSTLOOKEDMAGNIFICENT

SOUNDS TO ME LIKE EVERYONE SAW SOMETHING DIFFERENT.
AW, C'MON, YOU KNOW WHAT LOUSY WITNESSES PEOPLE MAKE. THEY CAN *NEVER* REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED IN THE HEAT OF ACTION.
OKAY, ANYONE WANT TO TAKE A STAB AT WHAT REALLY HAPPENED?
I THINK THAT HE REALLY IS INVOLVED.
I MEAN, HOW DID HE KNOW WHERE THERE WAS A BANK ROBBERY GOING DOWN IF HE HADN'T SET IT UP?
HE PROBABLY USED A POLICE RADIO, JUST LIKE *WE* DID.
YEAH, BUT THEN HOW'D HE BEAT BOTH US AND THE COPS THERE?
EVEN IF HE DIDN'T SET IT UP, HE *RISKED* A LOT OF PEOPLE FOR A ROBBERY THAT THEY WOULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN AWAY WITH *ANYWAY*...
WHAT'S THE STAT--69% OF ALL BANK ROBBERS GET CAUGHT?
THESE GUYS DIDN'T LOOK *SMART* ENOUGH TO BE IN THE TOP 30%.
GOOD, THEN. MURRAY YOU WRITE THIS THING FROM THE NEGATIVE ANGLE.
DON'T ACCUSE, BUT GIVE THE FACTS THAT SUPPORT YOUR STANCE. KEEP HIS HEROISM AN OPTION, BUT BUILD IN A HEALTHY SKEPTICISM.
JONES, YOU DO THE OPPOSITE--PLAY HIM A HERO, BUT LEAVE IT OPEN FOR IT BEING A SETUP SO WE DON'T GET EGG ON OUR FACES.
WE'LL WAIT UNTIL THE LAST POSSIBLE MOMENT TO DECIDE WHICH WAY TO GO.

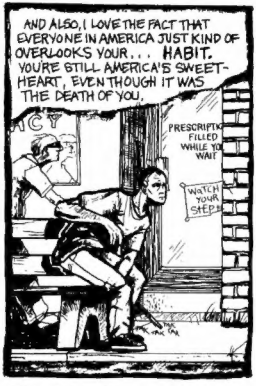
HEY, JUDITH, LOOKA DIS! SOME FREAK-BUTT IS RUNNING AROUND IN A HALLERWEEN COSTUME STOPPIN' CRIME!
6:04
OH MY GOODNESS! I WAS JUST IN THAT BANK YESTERDAY! THANK GOD I WASN'T THERE!
LOOKIT! THAT'S ME ON TV!
LOOKIT IT'S ME!
SSSHHHHH, HONEY! I WANT TO HEAR YOU ON THE TV.
SO WHILE THERE IS SOME DOUBT ABOUT WHICH SIDE HE'S ON, IT IS CLEAR THAT THERE'S A NEW FACTOR IN THE BATTLE BETWEEN THE GOOD GUYS AND THE BAD GUYS ON THE STREETS OF NEW YORK.
BANK HOLDUP
$
END OF PART ONE

Dear Judy Garland

STORY AND ART ©1995 BY ANDY BENNETT

DEAR JUDY GARLAND,
I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT YOU WERE THE BEST ACTRESS HOLLYWOOD EVER SAW. PEOPLE TODAY SEEM SO... HUNG UP ON MERYL STREEP OR JESSICA LANGE, BUT YOU ASK ME, THEIR EYES JUST AREN'T OPEN...
ABIERTO

REMEMBER A STAR IS BORN? MERYL STREEP. HA! NO WAY COULD SHE EVER DO THAT. NOT EVEN ON A GOOD DAY. JESSICA LANGE? IN HER DREAMS, MAYBE.


AND ALSO, I LOVE THE FACT THAT EVERYONE IN AMERICA JUST KIND OF OVERLOOKS YOUR... HABIT. YOU'RE STILL AMERICA'S SWEETHEART, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS THE DEATH OF YOU.
PRESCRIPTIONS FILLED WHILE YOU WAIT
WATCH YOUR STEP!

YOU'RE SO BEAUTIFUL. I CAN'T WAIT TO MEET YOU ON THE OTHER SIDE... WE CAN TALK FOR HOURS AND HOURS, AND TAKE PILLS TOGETHER ON THAT BIG YELLOW BRICK ROAD IN THE SKY...

THE MUNCHKINS, THEY'LL ALL SING, AND YOU'LL CLICK YOUR HEELS, AND WE'LL ALL GO HOME... HOME... JUST YOU AND ME, AND THE POPPIES... POPPIES. HOME. TOGETHER...
FOR EVER.

Edward Douglas
via CompuServe

Happy 2nd Anniversary, Joe!

I finally got around to reading NEGATIVE BURN #25, and here are some of my comments:

I probably would have been perfectly happy with the first five stories in this edition. I've been waiting for a new "Baker Street" story since I read the two trade paperbacks last year, "The Jam" is one of my recent favorites, and I just love Teri S. Wood (now, if only she'd finish up WANDERING STAR)! Along with some NB regulars and great work by some talented unknowns (at least, to me), all wrapped up in another beautiful Moebius cover (as if it could be anything but beautiful), this ended up being another peak for the series.

First off, the highly anticipated "Baker Street story "The Empty House" written and illustrated by Guy Davis:

Well, I was expecting a self-contained short story, but instead Guy gives us a concise introduction to the series, including a wrap-up to the last story and a seamless transition to the next. The cliffhanger ending was great, but I hope that you'll have some news soon about the new series so that we won't have to wait too long to see what happens next. Very interesting.

"The Jam" by Bernie Mireault shouldn't need no introduction. I've fallen madly in love with his characters and I strongly believe that this is what MADMAN should be, if it didn't get so caught up in the silliness. THE JAM must be the only comic that mixes superhero shenanigans with slice-of-life storytelling, though, and this story gives more of the latter than the former. This was a nice little look into the lives of Gordy and Janet but not a very good representation of the series itself, unfortunately.

The "Kabuki" story was a nice look into two of the Noh's agents through the eyes of the main character, and I enjoyed learning more about them. I didn't think that this was some of David's best artwork though, as it seemed a bit scratchier and unfinished compared to his work in the comic. The layouts were nice, though, and this story is beneficial to the series. (One thing that's bothered me a bit with KABUKI is that I keep thinking that I've read a certain passage before. I hope this won't be reprinted in the series, too.)

Next up is the long awaited preview of "Darklight" from Teri S. Wood. It looks like Ms. Wood has come back down to earth with this tale, but the most obvious reference seems to be A DISTANT SOIL. This preview is an interesting introduction to one of the characters without revealing too much about him. The art, as always, is lovely.

"The Apparition: Seven Deadly Sins" by some other guy named Pruett and one of my favorite new artists Matt Smith: I'm not sure what I like about Smith's artwork; it comes nowhere near to realism and the most obvious comparison I can find is a very rough Richard Case (who I also like quite a bit). This was an interesting story revolving around a homeless guy named Ed (um....no relation...not yet anyway) that takes an acid trip and ends up seeing the world as it really is with all of its sins revealed. I don't remember too many of the other "Apparition" stories, but they do remind me of your own "Kilroy" stories, as they rarely focus on the central character (kinda like the old HITCHHIKER TV series). This one was okay.

The Dave Gibbons installment of the "Alan Moore Songbook" was lovely, but I just haven't been able to get into this series of poems....which is all song lyrics are without music. Likewise, it was interesting to see some of Neil Gaiman's sketches, but I'd rather have seen a full story illustrated by one of NB's talented contributors.

"Suburban Nightmares Part 1": The artwork reminds me a bit of David Mazzucchelli, but I'm not really sure what to think of this story, since I'd have to see where it is going. I hope this doesn't turn out to be another one of those serialized stories that I have no interest in. (I can't even remember the name of the last one; I just didn't bother reading it). We'll see.

"The Protagonist vs. Fred": This was a pretty amusing alternative to the usual bar room fight scene, and I'd probably like to see more of this type of humor. I've never heard of "death by lollipop" before. <G> Has this character appeared in NB before? Looks familiar.

I liked Paul Pope's illustrated poetry more than usual, but that third page was a bit disconcerting and I'm not sure why. Like Teri Wood, I'd rather see Paul finish up his "previous obligations" before doing more of these pieces.

I was a bit too lazy to bother with Mark Rickett's prose piece, though, so I skipped over it. I'll read it when I get to all of those Harlan Ellison short stories in DREAM CORRIDOR that I've been stocking up.

"Dominique: Girl's Night Out": Another NB regular, although I had a lot more difficulty following it. Gene Gonzalez artwork is looking more like a certain Bros. Hernandez than ever before, and the rock band slant on this story reminded me even more of LOVE AND ROCKETS, but the story itself really didn't work for me. Oh, well. Maybe next time.

Greg DiGenti's piece for the issue was poignant and hilarious at the same time....as usual. It's way past time that he gets his own book as I'm sure that he'll be taken to heart by fans of Evan Dorkin and Peter Bagge. Very funny stuff.

I'll never understand "Mr. Mamoulian," so I've given up trying...how many of these are left to go? 15 to 20 or so? Fortunately, it only takes up one page an issue.

Overall, this worked better as an anniversary issue than DARK HORSE PRESENTS' $10 plus anniversary issues. I found a lot less that I liked in their individual issues and they probably could have been condensed into something about the size of NB #25.

I think that the quality of this issue and #23 will guarantee that I won't be hesitating before preordering another issue of NEGATIVE BURN. I was never really sold on some of the 'big names' in the book, but there seems to be enough talented newcomers submitting material to NB that it will always be worth the money.

Good luck with the next year! You really are going to have to work hard to top what has been in NB so far!

If you're a fan of Guy Davis' BAKER STREET then I've got good news for you! BAKER STREET will return in a special one-shot in the presentation format (like THE APPARITION last spring) in 1996. Plans are also underway for a NEW mini-series as well. I'll keep you posted.

The creative team of "Suburban Nightmares" are the same team that was responsible for the award-winning SILENT INVASION from Renegade back in the mid-to late 80's. If you haven't read this series before then you've really missed out! You can still get the collected trades from NBM. Be sure to ask your local comic shop to order them for you. They're well-worth the effort.

Both Mike Hoffman and Bradley Walton have appeared in these pages in the past, but this is the first appearance of "Fred."

So, does anyone else out there echo Edward's vote of giving Greg DiGenti his own book? If so, let me know. Voices from the masses can work wonders.

letters

Olav Beemer
Brugakker 36-06
3704 LP Zeist
The Netherlands

Dear Joe,

First off, since NEGATIVE BURN #25 marked the second anniversary of this very title, allow me to congratulate you and all involved on this admirable achievement. I'm aware the times are far from easy for small press books, so it's assuring to see that this book has come this far and has gained so much appreciation in the most recent months.

Unfortunately, despite the wide variety of themes and styles, this issue also was one of the weakest thus far produced. Not often have all of the first three installments in an issue failed to capture my interest or tickle my fancy, yet it was the case this time around.

For starters, "Baker Street" suffered from different ways of story-telling which in the end, didn't work out in merely eight pages. The tale was too bumpy, and although the artwork was fine, the lettering made it a hard read nevertheless. "The Jam" had the same problem, as this feature came quite close to being a non-sequitur kind of arrangement of different panels. Also, the "Kabuki" installment failed to do anything, as it was a story that didn't have a real plot, much to my surprise.

Fortunately, Teri Wood's "Darklight" preview was a gift from heaven. The incredible detail she puts into her work is so incredible, making every single panel something worthy of a second, longer look. I simply love Teri's work on WANDERING STAR, and this little preview made me extremely hungry for the upcoming DARKLIGHT series, especially since this looks to be a fantasy kind of tale instead of science fiction. Fabulous work!

After that, another batch of uninteresting pieces presented themselves. I was surprised at how disappointing "The Apparition" was, basically being another plot-less tale with an unsatisfactory sequence of events and an unoriginal conclusion. And that while I'm used to intelligent pieces of work from Jim Pruett.

The biggest surprise of this very issue was the Bradley Walton and Mike Hoffman production called "The Protagonist vs. Fred." The open, clear style of artwork really suited the funny story very well, and especially the absurdly hilarious ending was as much a surprise as it was entertaining. I really wouldn't mind seeing much more these talented men's work in these very pages anytime soon.

Same goes for Paul Pope, whose little short story was another formidable piece of work, creating a chilling and moody atmosphere by combining intense pictures with poetic words. If you can get Paul to do another feature for this book in the not too distant future, I would be one extremely happy camper indeed.

Greg DiGenti's one-pager was, as always, a load of laughs. This guy's a genius!

In closing, NEGATIVE BURN #25 ended with a four out of fourteen score. This certainly hasn't occurred in quite some time, but seeing how this is after all an anthology book, there's always the risk of not liking certain features. I guess fate wanted it that this time, you've picked more stories which are not my cup of tea and less that are. Let's just hope fate will be more generous to me next issue. In the meantime, stay healthy!

I'm disappointed that you didn't like much about #25, Olav. From the reaction I've received at the cons, through the mail, and over the phone, this issue has been hailed as the best issue of the series yet (which I tend to agree), but, as is often the case in anthologies, everyone's not going to like the same thing. Oh well, hopefully the last few issues have been more to your liking.

Which brings me to the next topic of conversation. So, how's everyone like the new format (page count, paper quality, price, etc.)? I want to hear from everybody, so let me know. As always, you can reach me at PO Box 893, Acworth, GA 30101 or over the 'net at 72164,1134@CompuServe. Get those letters in!

"The best new comic I've seen in ages!"
-John Moore, Comix Etc. & Wizard Magazine advisor

"The $2.95 cover price is well-spent on this black and white winner."
-Ian Feller, Combo Magazine

"An entertaining and well-drawn adventure..."
-Steve Bissette, creator of Tyrant

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